

COLLECTIVE+MIND



Welcome to Networks in Action!

We believe in the power of networks to foster collective action. We understand the unique struggles that networks face and the specialized approaches and strategies necessary for networks to be effective.

Our goal is to help **you** and **your network** be better equipped to create impact.

Welcome! Please check in...

Name	Network/ Organization	Where in the world are you today?	How are you feeling today?
Kerstin Tebbe	Collective Mind	Washington DC	Energized!
Angela Roberts	Community Health Partnership	Colorado Springs	Focused
Lauren Baier	100Kin10	New York, NY	Chilly :)
Tina Puryear	Freelance Facilitator	London, UK	Spring!
Karisa Tashjian	Digitunity	West Warwick, RI	Determined
Myriam	forumZFD/Collective Mind	Jerusalem	Serene
Sonia	Digitunity	Baltimore	Fine

Agenda for today

- Welcome and check-in
- Setting the scene (brief presentation)
- **What?:** Definitions (short breakouts)
- **So what?:** Implications (slightly longer breakouts)
- **Now what?:** Full group identification of key takeaways
- Closing

Neutrality in Network Management: What?

How would you define “neutrality in network management”?

- Supporting work towards the common good/vision
- Not allowing bias to impact your management
- Being impartial and fair, treating all participants equally
- Not forcing or disproportionately influencing the direction or decisions of a network
- Taking as objective an approach as possible with the network’s members so that the diversity of viewpoints is heard
- Ability to listen, empathize with a broad range of viewpoints while moving the network forward
- Establishing level ground so that various views have equal footing
- Letting members take the lead and do the work
- Attending to each member as a unique contributor to the whole
- Attending to power dynamics within the network transparently and fairly, to share resources based on need and ability to contribute

Neutrality in Network Management: So what?

Is it possible to be neutral in network management? What are the implications?

- Network managers play a key role in moving forward the collective action of network members.
- Full neutrality isn't possible but it's a skill to be developed, e.g.
 - requires an overall understanding of the bigger view and perhaps even application of systems thinking and experiences acquired that allow me to see the bigger picture
 - requires the network manager/facilitator to step beyond their own agenda
 - requires clearly noting one's implicit and explicit biases and assumptions and being transparent about them
- Also recognizing that there are times when we shouldn't be neutral, e.g. when we should challenge racist behaviors/comments/decisions

Neutrality in Network Management: So what?

Is it possible to be neutral in network management? What are the implications?

Ways in which to be more neutral (personally as a network manager and within the structures and systems of the network):

- Consider network structures and processes
- Ensure clear communications and set expectations upfront
- Practice, develop mechanisms for how to lift up voices from across the network
- Ensure transparent decision making
- Create space for reflection and learning and channels for feedback
- Develop facilitation skills for building trust, moving groups forward
- Stay open, vigilant, and humble

Questions? Reflections?

Use of term “neutrality” as opposed to others (e.g. impartiality)

Neutrality in Network Management: What?

Letting members take the lead and do the work - don't tell people what to work on or how we'll support them, want them to step up and take initiative, then support them, invite other members to participate → member driven

- Other side: trying to do it that way and having members say they need you to take the lead → finding balance between member input and leading - could appear as less neutral
- Maybe if were continually checking in, taking the pulse, that's enough - but ideal is members taking the lead
- Typical challenge of finding this balance - e.g. we have field-level view but members are experts

Backbone is put in a leadership position, people wait for us (e.g. to set agendas, etc.) - want to create neutrality so it's a space where everyone can share, engage meaningfully - focus on facilitating, stepping back, listening to responses, drawing folks out to share - create a safe space, build trust, determine capacity of everyone in the group → Change the hierarchical approach and mindset

Neutrality and impartiality - “multi-impartiality”: not just giving equal space but ensuring equity - members don't have same capacities and power - need to treat them in an equitable manner to have their voices be equal (e.g. not spending 1 hour with each member but spending the amount of time each one needs to express themselves)

Neutrality in Network Management: What?

Don't focus on neutrality - focus on being equitable - neutrality can recreate, entrench power structures we don't want to perpetuate

- E.g. giving equal space can mean some people are silenced

my network is experiencing that right now... we are bringing equity into our network's goal and working to create community norms etc. for participating and that is DEFINITELY not neutral... we are thinking about what it means to be neutral about some things but not others...

Neutrality in Network Management: So what?

The world isn't neutral - neutrality can lead to unintended outcomes - the impulse to make everyone feel safe to express themselves is good/important - but that space looks different for everyone

Tension between diversity and embracing it with efficiency of moving together towards a common goal - the former can take more time - but don't want to lose anyone along the path - so have to deal with that

When network goal takes a stance that isn't neutral, has implications for who is part of the network, what we do and how - e.g. meeting norms

Key tension of diversity and efficiency - important to name that in a group - neutrality is a concept we want to strive for, what does that mean, naming the power dynamics

Focusing on the element of safety - what do people need to feel safe, taking the time to understand that/break it down - really drawing it out, understanding what it means for each, as a facilitator giving room for different views

- Challenge of members who have no patience with these processes - how to address when the ways in which people contribute aren't helpful

Facilitator needs to be able to handle the conflict - if we don't feel safe, participants won't feel safe

Asking open-ended questions, giving affirmations, reflective listening

In the moment/meeting - the pre and post work is where we can also shape - carrying a lot of things as a facilitator in the moment - putting more emphasis on outside meeting times

Neutrality in Network Management: Now what?

How did this go?

Please take our [very brief feedback survey](#) - **thank you!**

Upcoming Opportunities

[Networks 101](#) - April 27th at 8am US ET

- Learn about what networks need to be effective and impactful

[Network Management 101](#) - May 4th at 1pm US ET

- Join us to learn about and discuss effective network management practices and skills

[Community Conversation: Generating revenue for networks](#) – May 18th at 10am US ET

[Working Group on Inclusive Networks](#) – June-July TBD

- Details coming soon

Check out our current professional development opportunities through [Collective Mind Academy](#) and watch our weekly newsletter for new content and opportunities!